

ABNORMALITY AS DEPICTED IN *PERFUME* BY PATRICK SUSKIND

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Abstract

This study is purposed to reveal abnormality in best-seller novel, entitled *Perfume*. The abnormality in this novel is reflected in two ways. They are social discomfort and violation. The theory of psychoanalysis is applied in this study. The result of the study shows that social discomfort faced by the protagonist happens as the effect of his social status as lower class and his bad condition as an orphan. Meanwhile, the violation occurs to the character because his tendency to hurt women for his obsession.

Keywords: Abnormality, Social discomfort, Violation, Perfume

INTRODUCTION

In this world, each person brings personality in her life. As stated by Schultz and Schultz (2005) personality refers to human external and visible characteristics, those aspects of human that other people can see. It means that personality is something that people cannot hide. It happens because humans need to do interaction with other. Thus, personality can be identified during this social life.

Basically, all human have good and bad personalities in their life. However, there is also a condition which a person has different personality if it is compared with normal people. It is also known as abnormality. It can be defined as a kind of personality disorder which a condition when humans are unable to perform roles expected by society (Butcher, Hooley & Mineka: 2014). It also relates to an idea of a disturbance in behavior that impacts negative judgement by society. Therefore, abnormality can be defined as behaviour that is away from normal so that the person who has abnormality is commonly rejected by society.

The concept of abnormality can be found in psychoanalytic criticism, especially in the concept of anxiety. Hall, Lindzey and Campbell (1998) states that the dynamics of personality is largely controlled by necessity in the sense of satisfying needs through their transactions with external objects. It indicates that anxiety may come because an individual is not succeed to fulfill her satisfaction. She also cannot fulfill society's expectation. This leads her to have troubles in her personality. At the end, she suffers for

abnormality. In addition, they add that when anxiety is aroused, it motivates the person to do something. He or she may free from the threatening region, inhibit the dangerous impulse, or obey the voice of conscience.

In addition, abnormality also relates to the concept of id, ego and superego by Sigmund Freud. Id is the first structure of human personality. Hall, Lindzey, and Campbell (1998) states that id is the root system of personality. When an individual has id as the dominant one in his body, his personality is just like an animal. This person tends to destruct many things. Id also includes instinct which can be defined as a sense to survive in life.

Then, there is ego, which can be defined to manage desire from id. Hall, Lindzey and Campbell (1998) think that ego is essential to control actions. Thus, ego is a kind of bridge to control id so that human can get rid of 'animal desire' in his life. The last one is superego, According to Hall, Lindzey and Campbell (1998);

Superego is the moral arm of personality. It represents the ideal rather than the real and strives for perfection rather

than pleasure. The main concern is to decide whether something is right or wrong so that it can act in accordance with the moral standards authorized by the agents of society.

The quotation above shows superego as the noble goal of personality. When someone has superego as the dominant personality, his action will be like an angel. It is because this person is able to differentiate which one is right and wrong. Those who have superego may have a great moral because it produces nobility.

Furthermore, Butcher, Hooley & Mineka (2014) explains that abnormality may come for several reasons. They are social discomfort and violation. These reasons cannot only be found in real life. The abnormality can be also reflected in fiction. One of them is a novel written by Patrick Suskind, entitled *Perfume*. This novel is interesting to be analyzed because it is also adapted into a movie. This indicates that this novel interests many people. Hence, abnormality in *Perfume* novel is revealed in this study through analyzing the protagonist, the setting, the plot and the conflict.

DISCUSSION

In this part, abnormality *Perfume* novel is reflected by the protagonist. He is described as an orphan who face a hard life. This leads him to suffer for abnormality as the effect of social discomfort and violation. Social discomfort is indicated when someone has no comfortability to his surrounding. In *Perfume*, the society tends to ignore the protagonist for his poor condition. His status as lower class family also makes him to be ignored by society, as depicted in the quotation below:

He wanted to get rid of the thing, as quickly as possible, right away if possible, immediately if possible. (p: 18)

The quotation above shows how the protagonist feels uncomfortable for what he does in front of public. He does not feel save even though it is his job. The words *wanted to get rid of the thing, as quickly as possible*, reveals that for him, to be in a public is the worst condition he needs to face. Besides, the words *right away if possible* also strengthen this idea. The same idea is also repeated for the third times in the words, *immediately if possible*.

Besides, the rejection from society toward the protagonist also makes him feel discomfort to the society. It can be seen from this quotation below:

There was not the slightest cause for such feelings in the Gaillard household. It simply disturbed them that he was there. They could not smell him. They were afraid of him. (p: 24)

In the quotation above, it depicts how society feels strange when they cannot smell the protagonist. As the effect, they indirectly stay away from the protagonist because they think that there is something wrong with him. In this case, the word *afraid of him* also strengthens the idea that the society does not want him to be apart of their life. This fact takes a role of social discomfort faced by the protagonist. It also leads him to have abnormality.

Besides, abnormality occurs because there is violation. This violation can come in numerous ways. It can be verbal or non verbal violation or it can be physical or psychological violation. Basically, this violation relates to norms in society, so it comes with an idea of behavior as framed in this following quotation:

She did not attempt to cry out, did not budge, did not make the least motion to defend herself. He, in turn, did not look at her, did not see her delicate, freckled face, her red lips, her large sparkling green eyes, keeping his eyes closed tight as he strangled her, for he had only one concern - not to lose the least trace of her scent. (p:45)

The quotation above shows that the protagonist addresses his bad behaviour to a girl. The girl's way to endure this behaviour shows that how

abnormal the protagonist react to her condition. The words *she did not attempt to cry out* reveals that she is frightened a lot. The words *did not look, did not see*, strengthens an idea that the protagonist's behaviour is a kind of threat for the women. At the last words, *not to lose the least trace of her scent* implies that the protagonist has abnormality for having obsession to ladies' smell.

Then, abnormality through violation also can be seen through criminal action done by the protagonist. It is depicted in the quotation below:

A murder had been the start of this splendour – if he was at all aware of the fact, it was a matter of total indifference to him. Already he could no longer recall how the girl from the rue des Marais had looked, not her face, not her body. He had preserved the best part of her and made it his own: the principle of her scent. (p:47)

In the quotation above, it shows violation through the protagonist's action by being a criminal. In this case, he becomes a murderer. He murders every woman from the upper class. Besides, he also kidnaps the girl. His obsession toward smell makes him suffer for abnormality because he has no problem to kidnap and to murder a lot of girls for his interests to smells. The description of this murderer can be seen in this following quotation:

Not long after the beginning of the jasmine harvest, two more murders occurred. Again the victims were very lovely young girls, again of the languid, raven-haired sort, again they were found naked and shorn and lying in a flower field with the backs of their heads bludgeoned. Again there was no trace of the perpetrator. (p:203)

In the quotation above, it shows that murder done by the protagonist not only for once, but for many times. Besides, he also does this action to those who have no mistakes to him. It can be seen from the words, *again the victims were very lovely young girls*. This indicates that the victims are still young and they are murdered without knowing their mistakes. Then, the words, *they were found naked* depicts an idea that they are killed in brutal ways. This makes the protagonist has abnormality in running his life.

Finally, violation in *Perfume* also can be framed because the protagonist has murdered 25 girls just to fulfill his desire to make a great perfume. It is shown in this following quotation:

With a few quick snips of his scissors, he cut open her nightgown, pulled it off, grabbed the oiled linen, and tossed it over her naked body. Then he lifted her up, tugged the overhanging cloth under her, rolled her up in it as a baker rolls strudel, tucking in the corners, enveloping her from toes up to brow. Only her

hair still stuck out from the mummy cloths. He cut it off close to her scalp and packed it inside her nightgown, which he then tied up into a bundle. Finally he took a piece of cloth still dangling free and flapped it over the shaved skull, smoothed down the overlapping ends, gently pressed it tight with a finger. He examined the whole package. Not a slit, not a hole, not one bulging pleat was left through which the girl's scent could have escaped. She was perfectly packed. There was nothing to do but wait, for six hours, until the grey of dawn. (p: 225)

The quotation above shows the description of violation done by the protagonist. The words *scissors, he cut* depicts that the protagonist uses a scary tool to do the violation. The words *he lifted her up* portrays that the protagonist does not regard his victim as a human. Then, the words, *rolled her up in it is a baker rolls strudel* frames that he is so cruel, his violation is out of logical thing. Finally, the words *only her hair still stuck out* illustrates that the protagonist does only murder but also torture the girls. His abnormality is shown when he feels fine when he tortured someone until she dies.

CONCLUSION

In short, in *Perfume* novel, abnormality is depicted through the protagonist. There are

several reasons for the protagonist to have abnormality. They are social discomfort and violation. In social discomfort, the protagonist tends to be ignored by society. It happens because of his social condition as an orphan. Meanwhile, violation in this novel is shown through his tendency to murder upper class girls through torturing. These two things become evidence that the protagonist reflects abnormality.

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